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PRESENCE OF YOGA IN ART

Summary: *Yoga is a philosophical system which has left its trails over the centuries in different areas of life. The art is no exception either. Art sculptures, drawings, graphics tell about artistic tendencies of the moment in which they originated, tainted with philosophy of life of the region that brought forth the Yoga itself. Tantra Yoga perceives sexuality as the possibility of achieving the enlightenment. In this paper the appearance of love couples in reliefs and sculptures on several temples in India (Khajurako, Konarak, Puri) will be dealt with. The plastic (the sculptures) on these temples represent an important phase in the development of the art in India, which points out to the historical moment and the cultural phenomenon regarding the sexuality which comes from Yoga. In this paper a deeper meaning of erotic sculptures is investigated which is expressed more comprehensive on the temples in India than anywhere else in the world. The presence of metaphysics in India's culture is referred to, which provides a large space for expressing the polarity of the male and the female principle in their eternal mutual play and the strive for the unity and achieving the deeper spiritual experience which is offered by Yoga. Within this context the sexual intercourse is not considered only as a strong act of desire but rather as something which also has a more profound level of cosmological conception, and it is the reminder of the cosmic creative act.*

Keywords: *art, yoga, sexuality, Tantra yoga*

Introduction

Parallelism between sexuality, philosophical consideration of the Universe and religious dogmas is the key feature of the experience of India. In mythology and cosmogony of India, there existed a tendency to represent this presence as a symbol of divine manifestation or as an act of outgrowing of this practice into a meditative praxis. In the experience of Tantra, which originated from Yoga, there is the intention towards deeper meaning of sexual symbolism and towards the experience which as its goal has the transformation of the human being. Tantra does not negate, it does not cancel the strongest primary sexual energy but accepts it as a powerful creative force which has the power to transform, and through this transformation to direct the human being towards the higher experience of existence. Through integration of strongly present sexuality, which was already present in folk tradition, the Tantric practice tends to direct this powerful, basic energy, which sets in motion everything, as well as the existence itself, towards the mystical experience. Now the question arises which ideals were the motives for decorating entire temples with reliefs and the plastic that had very explicit scenes of love couples in most diverse positions.

Everything that exists within the cosmic order is understood as a manifestation which comes from the embrace of divine couples, so that very often we can see, in the iconography of various schools, and as a regular depiction, the divinities accompanied by their shaktis or in embrace with them. In the epos Vamadevyā, one of the earliest texts, ritual chants are represented through a corresponding number of coital positions.

Thus yoni and lingam become symbols of the creation of the world. Between lingam and yoni there is a correlation, they cannot do without each other. Masculine organ (lingam) corresponds to the secret part of the goddess (yoni). Through transcendental interpretation the lingam loses its literal meaning and becomes the symbol of divine completeness, that is, of the efficiency, from which everything emerges and into which everything returns. Through the act of the worship of lingam one

tends to acquire knowledge of the divine principle of creation. In the context of the powerful symbolic which is related to the lingam, there existed regular rituals (for example, washing, applying butter) with the goal to transform the symbolic act of devotion into the meditation. The lingam is often, in some schools, represented as Shiva and as a symbol of his creative power. Through representing it as the penis erectus, the presence of governing over senses is emphasized, which above all is a divine aspect.

Through development of symbolism, the sexuality of yoni is characterized as a wavy motion of cosmic waters with unlimited possibilities of existence.

On plastic decoration of the temples in India we can see sculptures of gods and goddesses in overtly sensual sexual positions where the ample roundness through which the presence of pulsating life energy is emphasized. Figures which were displayed with so much openness and sincerity, as never and nowhere before, surely did set the imagination of the observer into motion and aroused various sensations in him/her. Thus different schools within Tantrism interpreted these depictions, this symbolism in different manners, this symbolic, as for example in some schools of "the left path", where everything is grasped literally and where allegory and real practice are often intertwined.

Regardless of what kind of interpretation is appropriated, images of divine couples are always clear in their representation. Instinctual human passion is unambiguously depicted; it is not negated but its strength is rather appropriated, used and redirected within the process of transformation in the direction of growth and the development as the meaning of life. Vividness of the figures on the temples in India is a powerful trigger for putting in motion of observer's imagination, either these depictions are interpreted as literal representation through which a transformation follows, or they refer to meditative passing through that experience when figures are interpreted as symbols of living through of the mystical experience of transformation.

It is an important fact that sexuality, as extremely strong life drive has found its expression and integrated itself within the spiritual experience of India, which is hardly to be said for the spiritual practice anywhere in the world. Instinctual life energy is not canceled here, it is not negated, but tends to be governed and redirected towards the higher spheres of the existence. In passing through love experience, love couple pays its respect and in fact strives towards the experience of the divine love couple (Shiva and Shakti, Krishna and Rada), where life is an expression of their eternal love play in accordance with the interpretation of Indian cosmogony. One level of interpretation of the sculptures displayed in their actual immediacy and openness would surely be that the life is the creation, motion, eternal play, but there is certainly also a deeper, hidden level of interpretation which was not easily accessible and was not just for everyone. Similar as in Western gnosis, or alchemy, where we can come to a solution solely through correct interpretation of the symbols, here also a key for correct interpretation is needed. Hidden language of expressing, as we can see in the Upanishads, speaks about the spirit of time, and surely influenced the manner of expressing which was present in Tantras. Therefore, symbolic way of expression had as its aim to protect the true knowledge and to make it hard to access with regard to curious people and those who were not ready for that path. Tantras, in their enthusiasm for passionate depictions of love couples provided the possibility of such an interpretation which could easily slip into a practice which has only erotic attitude, an empty debauchery, in absence of correct Gnostic interpretation and solving of the hidden language. Here also the rule was in power, as in most of Gnostic schools, that the disciple who intends to be initiated, passes a long way of devotion to his/her master, the temptation, devotion to the practice, meditation, and thus goes along the path on which he/she affirms his/her qualities and worthiness of being introduced into a true knowledge. The key for interpretation of tantric texts which describes certain actions (practice) which the disciple carries out is the knowing of the language and the techniques of Yoga. Reading of texts which teach tantric practice might be shocking for an inexperienced reader. Tantra, as the practice which emerged from Yoga, uses same expressions such as the word position (asana) while describing the love position. In the practice of Yoga we have asanas as positions of the body. In both cases the body is a tool in the process of transformation.

Vividness of depictions and artistic beauty of the decorations, as well as the texts of tantric schools, could not remain immune to literal interpretation of displayed and described scenes, so the

constant encounter of the profane and the esoteric is present. Natural instinctual force which initiates the mating of the love couple each time becomes for a moment the place of living through of the divine experience, of the bliss of returning into the One. The experience of the bliss of dissolving the limits, depending of how one approaches the act itself, can be only the consequence of the instinctual force within the human being or the conscious experience lifted up to the level of the transcendental, with the wish to prolong the state of the mystical experience to the point of total transformation, to the state of ananda.

On the plastic of tantric artistic depictions of the temples in India there dominate bodies of love couples, gods and goddesses, which pulsate in life force with an aspiration to transmit religious, spiritual message in the language which has the strong erotic foundation within itself. The authors freely, openly provide their sculptures with ample depictions and combinations of couples.

In the art of tantra and in the tantric practice the female is an active agent, which cannot be said for spiritual practices in regions which are outside of the spiritual experience of India. In Yoga practice the female does not have the prohibition of practicing positions, meditation, and spiritual practice in general. The female thus becomes an inseparable part of the process of transformation through Tantra as a Yoga discipline. The principle of existing of the living beings and everything in general through bipolarity has in its foundation an everlasting desire towards the union into the One, through dynamics which does not negate this bipolarity. Yoga offers the possibility of transformation of the instinctual life force into the means of transcendence.

peculiarity of India's spiritual and religious contribution to world's cultural heritage is that it integrated, in a rather special way, the force of life, the strength of the libido and the sexuality in the process of eternal life cycle of creation. Sexual charge in spiritual practice of India is integrated through the symbolic of the lingam and the yoni, through the symbolism of the love couple into the symbol of the eternity of life. It is only with the appearance and development of the psychoanalysis that in the West the importance of the libido is introduced into the field of the consciousness as the driving life force, in contrast to India where it found its expression centuries ago in spiritual artistic practice, overcoming the level of basic instincts, elevating itself to the level of the cosmic creative act. Contemporary age offers the dilemma of the correct understanding of the texts of Kama Sutra without entering the pornographic experience of the sexuality.

The area of artistic expression, considered historically, regardless what geographical region or time period it belongs, very often had included elements of real life depending on the period to which it belongs and on the spirit of the time itself. Constant energetic charge between masculine and feminine principle, present as a strong expression in the life of every human being, is integrated through artistic expression of the sculptures on particular temples in India. Here eroticism of the expression is not the purpose for itself, but it depicts the elements of strong life pulsation, the area of life activity and interest, lifted to the artistic level of expression. Artistic expression has always had the elements of intertwining with actual reality regardless of which epoch we speak about. Thus, here also we have the integration of the life fact with the desire to induce the strive towards higher spiritual and aesthetic experience.

Conclusion

Tantra Yoga teaches that in the process of searching and striving for redemption there is no need for any desire to remain hidden, because everything that is given to the human being as an aspect of the existence may become the possibility for knowing the divine. Life and sexuality are inseparable. Sexuality gives both the physical life and the possibility of birth on the higher spiritual level through transformation of the same foundational energy. No matter how open and free are the sculptural scenes on the temples in India, the correct interpretation and understanding requires a bit of the closeness to tantric esoteric knowledge through Yoga, from whose techniques of the control of breath, meditation, practicing of body positions the tantra itself emerged. Therefore, in this paper the tantric figures are viewed as the symbols in which tantric cosmology is pronounced, and the creative energy represented in intertwining of

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male and female sexuality. These symbols tell us about eternal creative principle. Our task is to read these everlasting messages of the wisdom of Yoga.

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